

County Level Food Assistance and Related Data for California

Introduction

- What percent of potential Food Stamp recipients participate in the program in San Bernardino County?
- How many people face hunger in Tulare County?
- How many qualified children in Butte County are using the National School Lunch Program?

Have you ever wanted to know how national and statewide problems such as food insecurity, poverty, and low usage of food assistance programs affect members of *your* community? This compilation of materials will serve to answer that very question. This binder contains recent data on food insecurity, poverty, food stamp usage, school breakfast program usage, national school lunch program usage, WIC usage, and body weight status for low-income children, broken down by individual counties or county groups within California. This compilation of quantitative and qualitative data creates a synergistic approach to identifying those counties in greatest overall need for outreach, education, and intervention programs. Specific uses for this information include grant writing, program planning, recruitment for local incentive awardees or other local projects, and gaining a better picture of regions within California.

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is one of the primary sources of the data in this compilation. CFPA is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious and affordable food. In 2002, CFPA created, on their interactive website, County Profiles of Poverty, Hunger, and Food Assistance, from which data on program utilization and poverty specifically referenced in this binder were cited. Counties are ranked by underutilization of a program, so that a #1 ranking represents the county with the worst utilization.¹

¹ <http://www.cfpa.net/>

Please note that when data from these profiles are cited, specifically data regarding utilization of food assistance programs, rank numbers may be missing and/or were not used by CFPA (sometimes done in response to a tied ranking.)

Food insecurity information in this binder comes from a policy brief written by Harrison and colleagues who used data from the 2001 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). CHIS is a collaborative project of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the California Department of Health Services, and the Public Health Institute. It is the largest state health survey conducted in the U.S., having collected information from 55,248 households from every county in California. The CHIS data that were utilized to create this policy brief came only from those households reporting income less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Counties are ranked so that a #1 ranking represents the county with the worst Food Insecurity.²

Data from the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS, California 2002, CDHS Children's Medical Services Branch) were also integrated into this collection of California county-specific information. PedNSS is a program-based surveillance system established to provide a framework for tabulating and interpreting state-specific information on the nutritional characteristics of low-income children. Its purpose is to identify prevalent nutrition-related problems, identify high risk groups, monitor trends, target resources for program planning and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. California PedNSS data are collected through the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) Children's Medical Services Branch. In the tables containing PedNSS data, rank compares each county's rate to the other counties. A #1 rank represents the best rate (done differently than CFPA and CHIS rankings.)³

For general comparison, immediately following this introduction is a summary of recent data on California demographics, food insecurity and federal nutrition program statistics compiled by the Food Research and Action Center. A summary of data on the United States demographics, food insecurity and federal nutrition program statistics, compiled by this same organization, is also included.⁴

² <http://www.chis.ucla.edu/>

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pednss.htm>

⁴ <http://www.frac.org>